Coaching Tip Number 18

Coaching tips will come out once a month to give you a flavor for what coaches do in an active coach/coachee relationship. If you have others that you would like this tip to go to each month you may send me their name and I will make sure they are added to the distribution list or you may forward this information yourself. For more information about coaching services at Marshall Space Flight Center you may contact Janie Moyers at 544-7552 or email Amanda.J.Moyers@nasa.gov.

Ken Blanchard Company

Challenge to Change

Half of all organizational change initiatives do not meet their objectives. In a survey of 350 senior executives across 14 industries, 69% confirmed that their companies had experienced unanticipated problems in the change process. Given the effort that is put into most change initiatives, why has the success rate remained so low?

Change Gets Derailed or Fails for Predictable Reasons

One of the primary reasons why many change efforts fail is because leaders do not consider change from a recipient's perspective. In any change effort, leaders need to address concerns that people have when they are asked to change. Unless you take the time to meet individual concerns, you will not be able to generate and maintain the momentum necessary for the change to be successful. There are six predictable and sequential concerns that people have when they are asked to change. By planning for these six stages of concern ahead of time, leaders can diagnose and respond to individuals predictable concerns with change and, therefore, reduce resistance and build momentum for moving ahead.

The Six Stages of Concern

1. **Information Concerns**
What is the change? Why is it needed? What is wrong with the way things are now? At this stage, people want to learn more about the proposed change and have the chance to ask questions. Leaders need to be careful at this stage that they do not shift from telling to selling. What people will want at this stage are direct, honest answers about what the change is all about. What people do not want at this stage is to be "sold" on the change and why they should accept it.

2. **Personal Concerns**
How will the change impact me personally? Will I win or lose? How will I find the time? At this second stage, people wonder if they have the skills and resources to implement the proposed change. This is one of the most overlooked and under-managed stages in organizational change initiatives and it is the underlying reason why so many change initiatives fail. Leaders need to create an atmosphere of trust

and genuine concern for how the change will impact people personally if they want others' support in taking the risk of changing. If leaders do not take the time to specifically address individual needs and fears near the beginning of the change process, they will find themselves fighting a difficult battle to surface them later on in the process.

3. Implementation Concerns

What do I do first? Second? Third? How do I manage all of the details? People at the Implementation Concerns stage are focused on the details involved in implementing the change. At this point, leaders need to specifically spell out who will organize the change, how and when it will start, and what the details of implementation will be.

4. Impact Concerns

Is the effort worth it? Is the change making a difference? Are we making progress? At this stage people are interested in learning whether the change is paying off. If leaders have done a good job addressing the first three stages of concern, this is the point in the process where people will sell themselves on the benefits of the change. By successfully addressing the initial stages of concern, leaders will find that their employees are more open to the change at this point and are ready to evaluate the change on its merits.

5. Collaboration Concerns

Who else should be involved? How can we work with others to get them involved in what we are doing? How do we spread the word? Now that employees have sold themselves on the benefits of the change, they are eager to spread the word and encourage others to implement the change as well. At this stage, leaders can begin to shift roles and allow others to run with the ball.

6. Refinement Concerns

How can we make the change even better? At this last stage, the change is well on the way and employees are now focused on continuous improvement and related ways to innovate. The leader's role is to encourage this refinement, support further innovation, and invite others to challenge the status quo.

<u>One Person at a Time</u>

Like it or not, in the dynamic society surrounding today's organizations, the question of whether change will occur is no longer relevant. Change will occur. That is no longer a probability; it is a certainty.

The issue is, how do managers and leaders cope with the barrage of changes that confront them daily as they attempt to keep their organizations adaptive and viable? They must develop strategies to listen in on the conversations in the organization so that they can surface and resolve people's individual concerns with change.

Change – even organizational change – happens one person at a time. This important fact is overlooked in most organizational change planning. The success of total change depends on the success of individual change multiplied dozens or hundreds or thousands of times. To be successful in implementing change on a large organizational scale, leaders need to think small and focus on individual concerns. By addressing the six sequential stages of concern outlined above, leaders can surface and attend to each of these levels of concern in succession. The result is a much greater change of implementing the change successfully.